

LTTE fails to reply to International Red Cross inquiry into arrest of Sri Lankan socialists

The WSWS Editorial Board
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On August 17 Singamani Rajendran, the mother of one of three Tamil socialists arrested by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), filed a formal complaint with the head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Colombo, calling on the ICRC to press for the immediate release of her son and two other members of the Sri Lankan Socialist Equality Party. Thirugnana Sambandan, Kasinathan Naguleshwaran and Rajendran Sudarshan were apprehended by the LTTE in Kilinochchi, a district in the north of the island controlled by the separatist guerrilla group.

A week later, on August 25, when the SEP leadership inquired about the progress of this complaint, the ICRC said it had promptly contacted the LTTE through their office in Mallavi—in the Vanni district where the arrests were made—but the LTTE had not replied to its inquiry.

This follows a definite pattern. Officially, the LTTE has said nothing about the whereabouts or well-being of the three Tamil socialists, nor what charges, if any, it has laid against them. This is despite an outpouring of inquiries and protests from around the world.

However, a statement recently circulated through Internet readers' groups, which bears all the hallmarks of an LTTE communiqué, denounces the SEP for waging an international campaign, claiming that the issue "should have been handled more easily if a respected organization such as the ICRC or even the parents of the parties concerned had talked to the LTTE."

Now the ICRC has spoken to the LTTE and the organization has once again refused to reply. This underscores the fact that the LTTE leadership cannot justify its actions, because the arrests were carried out

to suppress the political views of the SEP members. On July 28, when relatives of Sambandan and Naguleshwaran spoke with the LTTE official in charge of the area, Theepan, he said he had ordered the arrests because the SEP's politics had become an obstacle to the LTTE's activities.

The LTTE's Internet communiqué attributes the arrests of the SEP members to "suspicion that they were engaged in illegal activities." But no explanation is provided as to what these illegal activities were. New information obtained by the *World Socialist Web Site* confirms the SEP's charges that its members were apprehended because they are political opponents of the LTTE, and because the LTTE censors all non-LTTE-approved political activity—meetings, demonstrations or even the circulation of political literature—in the areas under its control.

Sambandan and Naguleshwaran were arrested July 26 as they were posting SEP placards in their village. The posters exposed the reactionary character of the "devolution package" being proposed by the Sri Lankan Peoples Alliance regime of President Chandrika Kumaratunga. They explained that the PA regime's promise of greater political rights for Tamils in the north and the east was just as false as its assurances before the last general election that it would end the war.

The statement went on to explain that every political force which is hostile to the working class and the oppressed masses, "from the imperialists to the Sinahala and Tamil capitalists, to the old left parties," was rallying to support the PA's devolution scheme.

Appealing to the Tamil workers and peasants, the statement insisted that the defense of democratic rights

could not be achieved under the decaying profit system, but only through a revolutionary struggle of the masses, led by the working class, for socialism. “The history of the region,” it said, “from India to Pakistan to Sri Lanka, showed that the capitalist class was incapable of securing the democratic rights of the oppressed masses.” The statement concluded with a call for the building of the Socialist Equality Party as the “leadership that fights for a socialist republic of Sri Lanka and Eelam, as part of a union of socialist republics of the Indian subcontinent.”

The only “crime” the SEP members are guilty of is the struggle to unite Tamil and Sinhalese workers against the PA regime on the basis of an international socialist program. The LTTE leadership is concerned about the growing support the SEP is receiving among Tamils who are increasing conscious of the blind alley into which the LTTE’s perspective of national separatism has led them. The LTTE leadership is seeking to silence its political opponents with repression.

The WSWs is waging an international campaign to win the release of the Sri Lankan SEP members. Scores of protests have been sent by individuals in the US, Canada, Britain, Germany, Japan, Russia and Australia to the LTTE’s offices in London. Recently a dozen New York City transit workers, members of Transport Workers Union Local 100, faxed a letter to the LTTE’s offices in London to protest the arrests.

The WSWs urgently calls on all of its readers, all labor and human rights organizations, and all those who defend basic democratic rights to send faxes and letters to the LTTE condemning the arrest of the SEP members in Kilinochchi and demanding their immediate and unconditional release.

Letters should be faxed to:
LTTE, c/o Eelam House (London) at: 44-171-403-1653
Telephone: 44-171-403-4554.

Statements can also be mailed to:
LTTE, c/o Eelam House
202 Long Lane
London SE1 4QB
United Kingdom

Please send copies of all statements of protest to the WSWs at:
email: editor@wsws.org
Fax: (US) 248-967-3023



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact